

LAND CONSERVATION

Assistance from Virginia State Agencies for

Virginia's State Agencies Helping Property Owners Conserve Their Land-Based Resources.

Virginia's state agencies provide a variety of programs to assist property owners with the conservation of their lands and land-based resources. Property owners pre-serve open space for many reasons. Some do so because of their love of land, others for historic or cultural reasons. Still others

recognize the recreational and conservation benefits that result from conservation. In short, land conservation preserves our heritage and improves our waters, our wildlife and our quality of life.

As a property owner, you have a number of options available to you to preserve land and resources. You can donate the land, sell the land at a reduced price or pursue a conservation or "open-space" easement. Each has potential tax benefits associated with it. Donating land to a state conservation organization is one way to share its beauty with future generations. A donation of land can be set up in a way that allows you to continue to live on the land or to receive a life income. Selling land to a conservation or preservation entity at less than its fair market value (bargain sale) can make it affordable for you. Placing an easement on your property involves completing a legal agreement with a land trust or government agency that permanently protects land while you continue to own the property.

Easements certainly offer a number of benefits to property owners wishing to conserve their natural and historic resources. Easements allow owners to ensure their property remains largely undeveloped as a farm, a woodland, an urban historic dwelling or a natural area permanently. Additionally, land protected by a conservation or historic preservation easement is still private property. These easements also have the flexibility to meet the specific desires of property owners and fit the property they protect. They provide financial benefits to property owners who protect their land and resources. They can reduce state and federal income taxes. Easements may also lower property taxes. The tax advantages of easements can make it possible for another generation to keep a family's land. They can make affordable conservation and historic preservation goals that would otherwise be beyond the means of many people. Virginia's state agencies are available to help you explore conservation and preservation options. They have information, tools and funding alternatives that can assist property owners in protecting their valued lands

and resources. A list of these agencies and their programs is provided in this brochure. For further links to information on state agencies, federal agencies, land trusts and conservation groups involved in Virginia's land conservation efforts, visit the Department of Conservation and Recreation's website at: www.dcr.state.va.us/olc or e-mail the DCR Land Conservation Office at: landcon@dcrr.state.va.us.

The Commonwealth of Virginia's Resource Conservation Offerings

Agency	Funding	Mapping/Data Resources	Types of Lands to be Conserved	General Information
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (804) 225-2048 www.dcr.state.va.us	Virginia Land Conservation Fund Virginia Outdoors Fund Virginia Recreational Trails Fund Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	Conservation Lands Database	natural, historic, recreational, scenic and cultural resources	land conservation, recreation, open space, natural areas, state parks, soil and water conservation
Virginia Outdoors Foundation (804) 225-2147 www.virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org	Open-Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund	open-space easements	natural, scenic, historic, open-space and recreational areas	open-space easements
Virginia Department of Forestry (434) 977-6555 www.dof.state.va.us	Forest Legacy Program	Forest Resource Assessment, forest land use, forest property inventory, riparian buffers	forest easements and acquisitions	forestry, riparian buffers, land use
Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (804) 786-2373 www.vdacs.state.va.us		agricultural purchase-of-development rights, Farmlink	agricultural purchase-of-development rights	agriculture, consumer services, agribusiness, markets
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (804) 367-1000 www.dgif.state.va.us	Wetland Conservation Projects, Small Game and Quail Habitat Costshare	hunting, fishing, boating, wildlife management areas	wetlands, habitat and wildlife management areas	hunting, fishing, boating, wildlife habitats
Virginia Department of Historic Resources (804) 367-2323 www.dhr.state.va.us	Historic Preservation Grants, State Rehabilitation Tax Credits, Threatened Sites, and Survey and Planning Cost Share Grants	Virginia Historic Resources Survey Data, Virginia Landmarks Register	architectural, archaeological, cultural resources, battlefields, and historic landscapes	historic preservation and related disciplines

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation offers localities and landowners advice on land conservation strategies, recreational planning, protecting Natural Areas and conserving land for State Parks. The Department provides staffing for the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation that provides grants to public and private entities. The Department maintains a Conservation Lands Database and produces the Virginia Outdoors Plan every five years.

DCR programs include:

Office of Land Conservation: DCR's Office of Land Conservation provides information and contacts for individuals interested in protecting their land. The Office serves as a central contact, repository and clearinghouse for land conservation interests in Virginia. It connects individuals with the information and agency, land trust or organization that best addresses specific land conservation needs. The Office also facilitates cooperative ventures, provides technical assistance, and conducts workshops and training events.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program: CREP aims to improve Virginia's water quality and wildlife habitat by offering rental payments to farmers who voluntarily restore riparian buffers, filter strips and wetlands through the installation of approved conservation practices. CREP has a goal to establish 8,000 acres of easements statewide.

Natural Heritage Area Dedications and Registry: Natural Area Dedications and Registry are conservation options available to landowners of highly significant natural areas. Landowners participating in these programs agree to voluntarily preserve and protect rare plants, animals and natural communities on their land and receive management assistance.

Grants Programs: DCR administers several grant and planning programs related to land conservation. The Virginia Land Conservation Foundation provides matching grants to localities and conservation organizations for purchasing land or for acquiring easements on land for the protection of historic, conservation, forestal, agricultural and recreational values. The Virginia Outdoors Fund, which includes funds from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, provides a grants-in-aid program for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The Virginia Recreational Trails Fund provides grants for developing and maintaining recreational trails and trail related facilities.

Additional Programs: The Department also has information on Scenic Rivers, Byways and Highways Programs, Virginia's Conservation Lands Database that includes mapped boundaries and information on public and certain permanently protected lands, Cave Protection and the *Virginia Outdoors Plan*, which is the state's primary document regarding Virginia's outdoor recreation and open-space needs.

For more information call (804) 225-2048
or visit the DCR website at <www.dcr.state.va.us>.



Virginia Department of Forestry (VOF)

One of the Virginia Department of Forestry's primary goals is the conservation of Virginia's forestland base. DOF manages more than 50,000 acres of state forestland and helps other state agencies manage state-owned forestland. The agency's mission is to "protect and develop healthy, sustainable forest resources for all Virginians." This statement indicates the agency's dedication to conserving "working forests" that provide forest products, wildlife habitat, water quality protection, recreation opportunities and aesthetic benefits. DOF professionals work with private, non-industrial landowners, localities and other stakeholders to conserve, manage and protect Virginia's forests.

DOF programs include:

Forest Stewardship: DOF has professional foresters who can provide guidance and direction to landowners in setting forest management objectives. DOF will work with landowners to develop a Forest Stewardship Plan giving consideration to overall landowner goals and objectives.

Forestry Legacy: This program aims to protect and conserve important forests threatened by conversion to non-forest uses, such as development. Virginia may use Forest Legacy funds to purchase conservation easements or land. DOF plans to focus most of its efforts on purchasing conservation easements to enable conservation of the greatest amount of forestland.

Riparian Restoration: DOF works with organizations, businesses and private landowners to establish, enhance and maintain riparian buffers. The program also promotes and conducts educational and outreach activities.

Urban and Community Forestry: This program encourages projects that promote tree planting, the care of trees, the protection and enhancement of urban and community forest ecosystems, and education on tree issues in communities. Grants are awarded to encourage local government and citizen involvement in creating and supporting long-term and sustained urban and community forestry projects and programs at the local level.

For more information call (434) 977-6555
or visit the DOF website at <www.dof.state.va.us>.



Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF)

Land conservation work is consistent with meeting a fundamental goal of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries – wildlife habitat management. DGIF's 30 wildlife management areas, comprising about 190,000 acres, provide a rich variety of wildlife habitat suitable for hunting and fishing as well as viewing wildlife, unique plant communities and spectacular scenery. In addition to habitat management on its property, DGIF professionals share with other state agencies, schools, private citizens, farmers and corporations the technical know-how in restoring and preserving habitat. The agency offers various programs, information, workshops, publications and technical assistance on land management and conservation.

DGIF programs include:

Habitat Partners®: Habitat Partners offers a Corporate Certification Program that is open to businesses and industries interested in habitat improvement projects on their lands that will make a substantial contribution to the welfare of wildlife communities. By encouraging companies to establish or improve wildlife conservation practices and by providing a framework for recognition of these corporate conservation projects, DGIF hopes to improve wildlife education opportunities for a company's employees as well as for the citizens of the community.

Forest Stewardship: DGIF employs a "Forest Stewardship" approach to resource management. Forest Stewardship recognizes that forest products do not have to be obtained at the expense of wildlife, clean water, recreation or endangered species.

Wetlands Restoration and Preservation: DGIF works with the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, North American Wetlands Conservation Council and North American Wetlands Conservation Act funding to purchase land for approved wetland conservation projects.

Habitat At Home®: DGIF helps homeowners create mini-sanctuaries for birds, butterflies, frogs and other wild creatures by improving the habitat elements found in backyards. A landowner might plant a shrub border or a ground cover, add a few climbing vines or a perennial bed of native wildflowers, or install a small water feature.

Wildlife Habitat Technical Assistance: Rural landowners can receive onsite habitat technical assistance to improve land management practices for a wide variety of upland wildlife species. Technical assistance includes recommendations for wildlife plantings and maintenance of existing habitats. Landowners will receive a written habitat management plan. Cost-share programs that help landowners implement habitat management vary considerably. Biologists can provide up-to-date information on the various programs available.

For more information call (804) 367-1000
or visit the DGIF website at <www.dgif.state.va.us>.



Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF)

The primary mission and purpose of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation is statewide land conservation through accepting donations of open-space easements. VOF now holds easements on more than 224,500 acres in 76 localities. These easements protect a variety of scenic, natural and cultural resources, including watershed areas, the settings for historic houses and Civil War sites, agricultural lands, mountain views and land adjacent to parks. Through gifts of property, the VOF also owns approximately 3,500 acres of open land and one historic site. These sites help meet demand for public access and low intensity recreational use. In addition to the conservation easement program, VOF manages the Open-Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund, a grant program that provides funds to assist landowners with the cost of donating an easement.

VOF programs include:

Conservation Easement Holding and Assistance: The primary mechanism for accomplishing VOF's mission is open space easements. VOF staff responds to questions from landowners, prospective buyers, real estate agents and attorneys regarding conservation easements. Staff also reviews forestry plans, building plans and Virginia Department of Transportation road projects to make sure easements remain protected. This stewardship function of the conservation easement program is crucial to overall success of the program.

Open-Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund: This fund is used to help landowners with the costs of conveying conservation easements and to purchase all or part of the value of easements. Funding priority is given to applicants owning family farms and demonstrating financial need, and funds are for cost-only reimbursement projects.

Historic Aldie Mill: VOF has successfully restored Aldie Mill to serve as an operating example of an early 19th century manufacturing wheat and corn mill. A volunteer program has been started and the Mill is open for tours and to the general public seasonally on weekends.



For more information call (804) 225-2147
or visit the VOF website at <www.virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org>.

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) administers the Virginia Agricultural Vitality Program. Established in 2002, this new program contains a farmland preservation component. VDACS, working cooperatively with agricultural, business, local government and conservation community members, is developing a model purchase of agricultural development rights (PDR) program to assist localities in the development of their own agricultural PDR programs. Development of this model vision for farmland preservation was based on input from localities with PDR programs.

VDACS programs include:

Agricultural Vitality: The purpose of this initiative is to create programs to educate the public about the importance of farmland preservation to the quality of life in the Commonwealth and to provide technical, professional and other assistance to farmers on matters related to farmland preservation.

Farmland Preservation: VDACS is developing model policies and practices that may be used as a guide to establish local PDR programs. This includes the development of criteria for the certification of local purchase of development rights programs as eligible to receive grants, loans or other funds from public sources for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements.

Farmlink: This program provides assistance to retiring farmers and individuals seeking to become active farmers in the transition of farm businesses and properties from retiring farmers to active farmers. Assistance includes help in the preparation of business plans for the transition of business interests; assistance in the facilitation of transfers of existing properties and agricultural operations to interested buyers; information on innovative farming methods and techniques; and research assistance on agricultural, financial, marketing and other matters.

For more information call (804) 786-2373
or visit the VDACS website at <www.vdacs.state.va.us>.



Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR)

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources is the State Historic Preservation Office. Its mission is to foster, encourage and support stewardship of Virginia's significant historic, architectural, archaeological and cultural resources. The department provides a range of programs and services, technical assistance, and financial incentives to property owners for public and private benefit.

DHR programs include:

National and state registers: Private property owners, local governments, and nonprofit organizations seek designation of historic sites on the National Register of Historic Places and Virginia Landmarks Register, the official listings of significant structures, sites, objects, and districts that embody the historical and cultural foundations of the nation and state, respectively. Properties listed on the National Register may be eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits.

Historic Resources Survey: Private property owners, local and state governments, and consultants research the comprehensive DHR database of landscapes, districts, and historic sites. More than 150,000 architectural and archaeological properties have been recorded and added to the inventory of sites.

Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits: For owners of income producing properties, a federal tax credit of 20% is available for the rehabilitation of commercial historic properties that are listed on the National Register. For homeowners as well as other property owners, a state tax credit of 25% is available for the rehabilitation of historic properties that are listed on, or meet the criteria for, the National Register.

Threatened Sites: Private property owners, local government agencies, and nonprofit organizations seek Threatened Sites funding to excavate archaeological sites of statewide significance that are under threat of destruction. These sites are ones for which no other sources of funding are available. Potential eligible sites are evaluated both by department teams and a Threatened Sites Committee composed of members of the archaeological community. Funds are committed for assessment, excavation, laboratory processing and analysis, and reporting.



For more information call (804) 367-2323
or visit the DHR website at <www.dhr.state.va.us>.